

Emergency Services and Reducing Poverty: Seattle Human Services

The City's Human Services Department (HSD) invests in programs and services that meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable people in our community — families and individuals with low incomes, children, victims of domestic violence, seniors, and persons with disabilities. HSD invests \$88 million per year in more than 230 community-based organizations that help people gain independence and success. The City of Seattle works collaboratively with other public funders, private foundations, businesses, community-based organizations, and faith-based communities to support the City's efforts to build strong families and healthy communities.

One of the goals of the 2005-2008 Consolidated Plan (Goal 2) calls for CDBG funds and related resources to “help low-income people meet their basic self-care and other survival needs, and improve their social and economic well-being.”

Strategic, Coordinated Investments

HSD's Strategic Investment Plan maps out the City's goals of preventing homelessness, hunger, poverty and illness and promoting social and economic independence and success. The plan also focuses our investments on organizations, programs and services with demonstrated success in making differences in people's lives.

The Strategic Investment Plan (<http://www.seattle.gov/humanservices/sip/default.htm>) includes strategies to prevent people from becoming homeless and to rapidly move those who are homeless into permanent, affordable housing. These strategies align with the community goals adopted in the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County. Our county-wide planning efforts are coordinated with the homeless Continuum of Care planning and implementation efforts for federal McKinney-Vento Act funding.

Information on the Ten-Year Plan is available on the HSD Web site at:
<http://www.seattle.gov/humanservices/emergencyservices/tenyearplan.htm>.

Seattle/King County Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

The City invests more than \$40 million annually in homelessness prevention and intervention services. Funds are directed at meeting emergency needs, ensuring that homeless and low-income households can secure and sustain housing, and improving and enhancing program delivery systems to low-income persons. Investments support a system that includes emergency shelter, day centers, hygiene facilities, meal programs, eviction prevention and rent stabilization, counseling, case management, outreach, employment, and transitional and permanent supportive housing.

Our community's strategies to prevent and end homelessness are guided by the planning work and priorities of the King County Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, A Roof Over Every Bed

in King County. The Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEH) identifies needs, prioritizes strategies and coordinates implementation of the plan. The City is one of the founding members of the CEH and is represented on its Governing Board and Interagency Council.

The CEH brings together homeless and formerly homeless youth/young adults and adults, members of faith communities, representative from philanthropy, business, local government, nonprofit human service and housing development agencies, advocates and other stakeholders from across the county, all with the common goal and a commitment to end homelessness in King County by 2015. The ongoing implementation of the Ten-Year Plan relies on a number of committees and workgroups to carry out short-term projects and develop longer term plans.

The Ten-Year Plan focuses on *ending homelessness* through five strategies:

- **Preventing Homelessness**
- **Moving People Rapidly Into Housing**
- **Building Political and Public Will to End Homelessness**
- **Increasing the Efficiency of the Existing System**
- **Measuring and Reporting Outcomes**

The Plan sets a goal of securing 9,500 new and existing affordable housing units by the year 2015. The Ten-Year Plan acknowledges that solutions to homelessness differ among each of the subpopulations of families, single adults, and youth and young adults and recommends numeric goals for housing development specific to each group. In addition, addressing disproportional representation of people of color among the homeless and attending to the evolving cultural competency of services working with the homeless and at-risk of homeless people is a critical issue woven through all of the Ten-Year Plan strategies.

Additional Services for At-Risk and Homeless Populations

Housing for Persons with HIV/AIDS

The City of Seattle is the Housing Opportunity for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) grantee for funding in Seattle, King and Snohomish Counties. King County, in which Seattle is located, has the highest rates of AIDS cases among all Washington state counties. An estimated 80% of the more than 6,300 persons diagnosed with HIV or AIDS in King County lives in Seattle.

The HOPWA program is an integral part of the countywide Homeless Continuum of Care and HSD's overall approach to preventing homelessness. In addition, HOPWA funding supports a coordinated community of AIDS housing providers within a larger AIDS services continuum serving Seattle-King County. The continuum of HIV/AIDS-dedicated housing includes independent and supported transitional and permanent housing units, group homes, medical respite, assisted living and skilled nursing beds.

Housing and Services to Assist Victims of Domestic Violence

Family violence and poverty often go hand-in-hand and the two sets of problems are difficult to coordinate. Annually, police respond to an average of 12,000 9-1-1 service calls related to domestic violence and more than 3,000 domestic violence-related physical assaults. In 2008, HSD used CDBG, ESG, McKinney, Office of Violence Against Women, and City general funds (GF) to support a network of three confidential emergency shelters, a safe house, and three transitional houses, a hotel-motel voucher program, and a rental assistance program for domestic violence victims and their children. Projects and associated funds included:

New Beginnings Emergency Shelter (CDBG, ESG, GF) and Transitional Housing (McKinney), the Salvation Army's Catherine Booth Emergency Shelter and Hickman House transitional program (CDBG, ESG and GF), and the International District Housing Alliance Solace Emergency Shelter (GF), and Solace Transitional Housing Program (GF). HSD also used general funds to support a hotel/motel voucher program to assist women and children in crisis when shelters were full. Through a new Office of Violence Against Women Transitional Housing Grant, six households were placed and supported in rental units by New Beginnings, the Salvation Army, and the International District Housing Alliance.

Each program facility offered advocacy services to assist victims of domestic violence and their children to: 1) access community resources, including legal services, health care, food, mental health services, income and other services to resolve safety needs and begin to rebuild their lives; 2) develop safety plans; and/or 3) navigate the legal system. Facilities also provided on-site services including child care, domestic violence support groups, chemical dependency groups and/or parenting skills development, clothing, transportation aid, and children's programs.

2008 Public Services Accomplishments and Outcomes

HSD identified three objectives that relate to ending and preventing homelessness. The objectives are:

- Meet the emergency needs of homeless and low-income persons.
- Ensure that homeless and low-income households can secure and sustain housing.
- Improve and enhance program delivery systems to low-income persons.

Meeting the emergency needs of homeless and low-income persons.

As work on implementation of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness continues, the need for emergency shelter, day centers, and hygiene centers for homeless persons and families will continue to exist. In 2008, CDBG and ESG funds were important resources for meeting emergency needs.

Ensuring that homeless and low-income households can secure and sustain housing.

In 2008, the City's efforts in preventing homelessness included the use of HOME, CDBG and HOPWA funds to provide assistance to tenants in danger of being evicted and to provide rental assistance to homeless persons transitioning into permanent housing. This objective is directly related to one of the primary strategies of our community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

Improving and enhancing program delivery systems to low-income persons.

The commitment to improve and enhance the delivery of services to low-income persons is supported by millions of local general fund dollars from the City. These efforts include investments in services and planning for adults, families and youth experiencing homelessness, hunger, domestic violence, and poor health. Our investments also provide mechanisms for evaluation and reporting on services and funding, including the Safe Harbors Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS).

Homelessness Intervention and Prevention Accomplishments & Outcomes

As we work toward ending homelessness, our objectives are focused on the outcome of moving people into stable housing and supporting long term stability. Using Consolidated Plan and non-Consolidated Plan funds, the City's HSD supported shelter and transition housing programs helped 1,382 homeless people move into stable housing in 2008.

Highlights of our work in 2008 include:

- **Supporting a Housing First system** for chronically homeless individuals with significant resources from City of Seattle *Housing First* funding, the King County Veterans and Human Services Levy, United Way, and other partner programs. This is a new response to chronic homelessness that will provide housing and supportive services for chronically homeless individuals, with a focus on veterans. In 2008, Plymouth Housing Group celebrated the opening of Langdon & Anne Simons Senior Apartments. The Simons Senior Apartments created 92 new, permanent supportive housing units for chronically homeless seniors and

veterans. Supportive services, housing case managers and a nurse are supported with City general funds dedicated for *Housing First* projects.

- **Preventing homelessness:** HSD invested more than \$2.9 million in eviction prevention and rent stabilization services, helping more than 1,895 households with emergency rental assistance, short term rental subsidies, and referral and housing case management services in 2008.
- **Coordinating housing production funding:** In 2008, the City, King County and regional jurisdictions continued to **collaborate and pool resources** through a Combined Notice of Funding Availability for supportive housing capital, operating, and services funds. Capital funding came from the Seattle Office of Housing, the King County Department of Community and Human Services, and east King County-based ARCH (A Regional Coalition for Housing). This funding was enhanced with supportive housing resources from these agencies as well as from the Seattle Housing Authority, the King County Housing Authority, and the Washington Families Fund. Operating and services funding awards of more than \$8 million over five years was committed to enhance services and operations at 11 housing programs supporting homeless individuals and families, including seven projects in Seattle.
- **Supporting the Continuum of Care:** Working with King County and in partnership with a network of more than 65 community-based programs, the City of Seattle supported **the joint Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program proposal** to HUD that was awarded **more than \$20 million** dollars in 2007. The award provided funding in 2008 for essential housing and supportive services for homeless people by funding more than 841 units of transitional housing and another 412 permanent supportive housing units for homeless people with disabilities. The most recently reported achievements for the Seattle/King County Continuum of Care are included in Tables 4 and 5.
- **Managing the Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System:** In 2008, **Safe Harbors HMIS** released the first full year of data collected by 170 participating shelters and transitional housing programs within King County. More than 19,000 client records were collected in 2007 to create a dataset for **nearly 9,000 people**. Just over 25% of those seeking emergency assistance were served in family groups; the remaining 75% were single individuals. More than 1,555 of the single individuals in Safe Harbors were identified as chronically homeless.²

The data being collected by the Safe Harbors program is helping local governments and nonprofit agencies identify needs and trends in efforts to best use and target limited resources to end homelessness.

² A person who is chronically homeless is a single adult suffering from a disabling condition who has been homeless for a year or had four episodes of homelessness in three years.

Seattle/King County's Continuum of Care (CoC) 2007 Achievements ³

Table 4: 2007 Achievements

Objective	Proposed	Actual
	12-Month Achievement	12-Month Achievement
Create new PH (Permanent Housing) beds for Chronically Homeless	1,064 beds	1,079 beds
Increase percentage of homeless persons staying in PH over 6 months to at least 71%	87%	85%
Increase percentage of homeless persons moving from TH (Transitional Housing) to PH to at least 61.5%	70%	82%
Increase percentage of homeless persons employed at exit to at least 18%	29%	30%
Ensure that the CoC has a functional HMIS system	88%	65%

Table 5: CoC Housing Performance

Data submitted from the most recent APRs (Annual Performance Reports) for each of the projects within the CoC was used to report on the CoC's progress in reducing homelessness by helping clients move to and stabilize in permanent housing.

Participants in Permanent Housing (PH)

a. Number of participants who exited permanent housing project(s)	251
b. Number of participants who did not leave the project(s)	982
c. Number of participants who exited after staying 6 months or longer	209
d. Number of participants who did not exit after staying 6 months or longer	845
e. Number of participants who did not leave and were enrolled for 5 months or less	137
Total PH (%)	85%

Participants in Transitional Housing (TH)

a. Number of participants who exited TH project(s), including unknown destination	1,029
b. Number of participants who moved to PH	845
Total TH (%)	82%

³ 2007 Achievements, reported to HUD in Seattle/King County's 2008 Continuum of Care Application, (10/23/08)

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program Outcomes

The 2008 HOPWA HUD required forms for each sub-recipient and detailed accomplishments are included in Appendix C. The following is an overview of program progress.

In 2008, HSD continued to support and co-facilitate monthly meetings of the HIV/AIDS Housing Committee is a joint, local Ryan White and HOPWA funding planning and coordination body. The Housing Committee is comprised of representatives from AIDS housing programs, case management providers and representatives from other housing and homelessness agencies both within and external to the HIV/AIDS field. The Committee develops local HIV/AIDS housing policies, conducts assessments of housing-related needs and addresses the full spectrum of housing issues facing PLWH in the Seattle/King County.

In response to current needs, HSD and the Seattle-King County Public Health HIV/AIDS Program (Ryan White CARE Act Administrator) coordinated a review and planning process to identify current and emergent needs and priorities for the Seattle-King County AIDS Housing Continuum in July 2008. This process is ongoing and will inform program funding and implementation in 2009-2010. Highlights from the 2008 program year include:

- Eight local housing and services providers received **\$1.6 million in grants and assisted 439 people** with housing, rental assistance and services. HOPWA funds helped move these individuals and families from homelessness into housing, avoid displacement and homelessness, and receive support that helped them access and maintain housing stability.
- HOPWA program housing stability outcomes exceeded HUD's national target level. HUD's target is that 80% of HOPWA clients maintain housing stability, avoid homelessness and access care. A total of 211 clients achieved housing stability with a HOPWA rental subsidy in 2008. Of the clients who left the program and moved to more stable housing, 85 households moved into stable placements. When added with the 126 households who remained in HOPWA assisted housing units, our program achieved stability for 97% of the households assisted with housing subsidies.
- Eighteen, new permanent, supportive housing units opened in October 2008. *Kenyon House*, a collaborative partnership of three community based housing and service providers, Building Changes, Housing Resources Group and Sound Mental Health, provides affordable housing for people who are living with HIV/AIDS and who struggle with mental illness, chemical addictions, or histories of incarceration. The program providing affordable housing and services, including links with Bailey-Boushay Day Health Program and the Harborview-Madison Clinic. The project includes federal HOPWA SPNS (Special Projects of National Significance) funds and local funds, including Seattle administered HOPWA funds.

Homelessness and Domestic Violence

Shelters for victims of domestic violence provided emergency housing for more than **200** households in desperate need of immediate safety. Confidential emergency shelters provided safe housing with enriched services to 190 households. An additional 174 households were placed in pre-screened hotels or motels. Twenty-six percent of those households later moved to emergency shelters as space became available. The Salvation Army's Catherine Booth House moved from a community living facility to an apartment building. This move increased the agency's capacity from eight units to 12 units. The length-of-stay limit was eliminated in 2007, as programs transitioned to an enriched shelter and interim housing service model, so shelter stays have lengthened.

Services at domestic violence shelters have historically been enriched to include safety planning, advocacy-based counseling, legal advocacy, women's support groups, access to resources, and children's services. Some domestic violence programs are adding access to education, job training, and employment to their service offerings. Over half of the families served moved on to permanent or transitional housing.

Due to a more limited length of stay in the hotel-motel voucher program, services are focused on immediate safety concerns and placement in a more stable housing option. The hotel voucher program was particularly helpful to culturally specific domestic violence service providers that do not have their own shelter facility. In general, domestic violence agencies were able to access this resource for victims with multiple barriers, including limited English skills, special cultural needs, sexual orientation or gender identity, and disabilities.

Fifty-two households were served in transitional housing units and through the newly funded rental assistance program. Seventy-seven percent of these households moved into permanent housing.

The City supported domestic violence shelter and housing programs with over \$225,488 in Consolidated Plan funds, as well as \$318,291 of McKinney funds and \$70,230 of Office of Violence Against Women funds. The City further showed its commitment to providing safety and services to homeless victims of domestic violence through an allocation of \$402,676 in City general funds for a total of \$1,016,685

2008 Accomplishments (see Table 6 following)

- The ability to obtain stable, supportive housing is often the pivotal factor that allows victims to permanently leave their abusers. Through a newly awarded Office of Violence Against Women (U.S. Department of Justice) grant, *Bridges to Housing*, rental assistance and supportive services were provided six families during the first years of a three-year grant.
- A second Office of Violence Against Women (U.S. Department of Justice) grant awarded to the City in 2007 completed its first year of a three-year pilot project focusing on the needs of domestic violence survivors with mental health issues. Grant activities will include cross-training for staff in domestic violence, mental health, and chemical

dependency on culturally appropriate services for victims of domestic violence who are disabled by mental health issues. The project will also serve to strengthen relationships among providers, develop protocols for case consultation, and provide technical assistance as needed.

- Initiatives in the DV Homeless Strategic Plan were addressed by domestic violence community-based agencies and homeless/housing service providers.
 - A pilot project to create a pool of temporary, flexible funding to help prevent homelessness was funded by the state for South King County. Survivors of domestic violence who are safe in their home but have financial limitation may also access these services.
 - City funding for civil legal services for domestic violence survivors was provided during 2008. Additional funding for an immigration attorney for domestic violence survivors was approved for 2009.
 - Community-based domestic violence and homeless services providers have worked with both housing authorities on issues related to flexibility in suitability requirements for housing and to revise their eviction and hearing procedures for survivors when domestic violence dynamics were the primary cause of the eviction.
 - One access point (Day One Program) for domestic violence shelters and transitional housing options was successfully established by HSD's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program (DVSAP). Currently 13 agencies in three counties (King, Pierce, and Snohomish) participate in the program (see below for more detail).
 - The development of a model hotel-motel voucher program was completed with 10 community-based domestic violence victim services agencies participating. The program is administered by the YWCA. Additional City money was provided to this program when funding was exhausted in October due to the need.
 - The YWCA received King County funding for the Tenant/Landlord Liaison Project. Domestic violence victims will be among the beneficiaries of this program.
 - Eastside Domestic Violence Program received funding to do outreach and education to landlords related to domestic violence and fair housing legislation for victims of domestic violence. The hope is to expand this pilot project to other parts of King County.
- DV shelter/housing providers in East and South King County were awarded state and county funding (2060, 2163, and Washington Families Fund) to implement permanent housing projects with supportive DV services as needed.
- Northwest Justice Project received City funding to provide free civil legal services to low income victims of domestic violence (see above). The project is a three-tier system that provides legal assistance via phone/e-mail to advocates working with survivors, brief consultations, and full legal representation.

- The City, together with community partners, began working in 2007 toward the implementation of the Day One Program, real-time Web-based shelter bed inventory software and procedures with the goal of implementing a system whereby callers get connected with shelter services with just one call, increasing access to shelters. The program was launched in October of 2008 and has been extremely successful in providing prompt information about shelter space and in better managing shelter inventory.
- The “Peace in the Home” Toll Free Helpline, a hotline for non-English speaking victims of domestic violence, was launched. The hotline offers one-call access that links to a menu of 14 languages and directly connects callers to a community-based agency that can serve their language and service needs.
- The assessment process to determine if the Seattle community is supportive of a Family Justice Center and if such a center is financially feasible was completed. A Family Justice Center is a co-location model whereby criminal justice and community-based domestic violence services are located in one building to serve victims (adults and their children) of domestic violence. Possible funding sources are being explored.

Table 6: 2008 Accomplishments—Domestic Violence Services				
Agency	Project	Fund Source	2008 Households served	Total Units
New Beginnings	Emergency Shelter	GF, CDBG, ESGP	114	11
New Beginnings	Transitional Housing	HUD-McKinney	31	16 ⁴
Salvation Army	Catherine Booth House Emergency	CDBG, ESGP	50 ⁵	12 ⁶
Salvation Army	Hickman House Transitional	HUD-McKinney (Direct), CDBG	14	12
International District Housing Alliance	Solace Emergency	GF	10	3
International District Housing Alliance	Solace Transitional	GF	7	5
Bridges to Housing Project (IDHA, New Beginnings, Salvation Army)	Transitional Rental Assistance	OVW-DOJ	6	6
YWCA	Emergency Hotel/Motel Vouchers	GF	190	N/A
TOTAL⁷			422	65

⁴ One less unit than usual due to maintenance and repair on the unit.

⁵ Fewer families due to change in facilities

⁶ Four additional units due to change from large group home to apartments

⁷ Duplicated count since households may move along the continuum from one housing option to another

Challenges in Ending Homelessness

Seattle has achieved much progress over the last year; however we continue to face many challenges and barriers to ending homelessness in our community. The Committee to End Homelessness has done substantial research to identify the factors that create and sustain homelessness for families, adults, and youth.

- **The high cost and shortage of housing** – It is nearly impossible for low-income individuals and families to find affordable housing in Seattle. The average one-bedroom apartment in Seattle requires an hourly wage of \$19.52, more than two times the minimum wage. This is equivalent to an annual income of \$40,600 – over 70% of median income for a one-person household. Workers in a number of different occupations cannot afford a one bedroom apartment in Seattle’s rental market. Five common Seattle occupations – food server, child care worker, retail salesperson, administrative assistant and paramedic – earn too little to afford average one-bedroom apartment rent. In the current rental market (both nonprofit and private units), screening criteria related to credit, criminal history and prior rental history, and lack of money for security deposits are some of the biggest barriers people face in finding housing and exiting homelessness. Average incomes among the homeless population cannot keep pace with market rents; apartment owners report that the number one cause for evictions is nonpayment of rent.

Seattle has a long history of leveraging its local Housing Levy with state and federal funds to support development of housing units dedicated to serving vulnerable and homeless populations. The strategies proposed in the Ten-Year Plan are intended to maximize those resources by designing services that increase the success of individuals and families in retaining housing once it is achieved in either the public or private housing market, and to prevent people from entering the homeless system after experiencing a crisis.

- **Fragmented systems** – The support system for people experiencing homelessness still suffers from system fragmentation. System fragmentation often means that services are patched together across different agencies for different subpopulations. Further, people must make many calls to even begin to access services.
- **Institutional discharge to homelessness** – Institutions such as jails, prisons, residential treatments, or hospitals often release people without adequate reentry plans for housing stabilization. Many of these individuals need support services in addition to housing resources.
- **Lack of community supports** – Families, churches, neighborhoods, and schools frequently operate as webs of support that enhance quality of life and stability and to which individuals turn in times of crisis. In most cases, homelessness causes or exacerbates separation between people and the web of family and community supports essential to quality of life and stability.

- **Poverty, joblessness, education, and literacy** – Poverty is linked to homelessness, and lack of living wage income puts housing at risk when households must choose between paying for housing, utilities, healthcare, childcare, and food. Local and national research shows that at least one quarter of homeless people are employed, but without sufficient wages to support housing stability. Lack of educational opportunities limits access to living wage jobs.
- **Effects of mental illness and chemical addiction** – The most frequently reported disabling conditions for people who are homeless are chemical dependency and mental illness. Safe Harbors HMIS reported 1,555 singles individuals who were identified as chronically homeless in 2007. Chronic homelessness combines a disabling condition with long periods or repeated episodes of homelessness. These raw numbers typically under-represent the extent of disabling conditions among the homeless. Without treatment, these issues affect housing stability.
- **Racism** – People of color are significantly over-represented in the homeless population. Although Caucasians make up 77% of the overall population in King County, only 54% of the single individuals and 27% of the family members who provided information on their race to Safe Harbors HMIS are Caucasian. African Americans are the largest ethnic minority in the Safe Harbors system, at 36% of single individuals and 55% of family members. By comparison, they make up only 6% of the population in King County. In Seattle, the median income for households comprised of people of color is significantly lower than for white households.
- **Domestic Violence** - Nationally, studies show that as many as half of homeless women with children probably experienced domestic violence at some point prior to becoming homeless. A 2003 study reported that 38% of victims of domestic violence became homeless after separating from their abusive partner. Many homeless youth and young adults have experienced violence in their homes.

There continues to be a need for emergency housing options with flexible time limits. There are approximately 70 emergency units and 144 transitional units throughout King County. In addition to Seattle's Bridges to Housing program, Eastside Domestic Violence Program and Domestic Abuse Women's Network all have the combined capacity to provide transitions to permanent housing through rental assistance and services to 60 families. "Turnaways" continue to be high, though there is hope that the new Day One program will provide the opportunity to eliminate some of the duplication in the count and perhaps even manage emergency shelter space and hotel vouchers more effectively. Survivors of domestic violence continue to need access to legal and economic services that can help them out of poverty and into stable housing with economic security.

- **Access to health care** – The cost of health care is a significant economic barrier to housing for many low-income people. Systems for health coverage can be difficult to navigate. Lack of preventive care leads to emergency room utilization for health issues. Homeless people have high rates of chronic and acute health problems.
- **Legal issues** – Legal barriers and lack of affordable representation can lead to homelessness or the inability to secure permanent housing.